



Negotiating a Perilous Empowerment: Appalachian Women's Literacies (Race, Ethnicity and Gender in Appalachia)

Erica Abrams Locklear

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In many parts of Appalachia, family ties run deep, constituting an important part of an individual's sense of self. In some cases, when Appalachian learners seek new forms of knowledge, those family ties can be challenged by the accusation that they have gotten above their raisings, a charge that can have a lasting impact on family and community acceptance. Those who advocate literacy sometimes ignore an important fact — although empowering, newly acquired literacies can create identity conflicts for learners, especially Appalachian women. In *Negotiating a Perilous Empowerment*, Erica Abrams Locklear explores these literacy-initiated conflicts, analyzing how authors from the region portray them in their fiction and creative nonfiction.

Abrams Locklear blends literacy studies with literary criticism to analyze the central female characters in the works of Harriette Simpson Arnow, Linda Scott DeRosier, Denise Giardina, and Lee Smith. She shows how these authors deftly overturn stereotypes of an illiterate Appalachia by creating highly literate characters, women who not only cherish the power of words but also push the boundaries of what literacy means.

Negotiating a Perilous Empowerment includes in-depth interviews with Linda Scott DeRosier and Lee Smith, making this an insightful study of an important literary genre.

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